

Practice. Claims 19 –21 have been amended to conform with U.S. Practice. No new matter has been added.

We look forward to a favorable action on the merits at an early date.

Respectfully submitted,



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**Marked Up Copy Showing Amendments**

53. 19. (Amended) A method for operating an ion thruster, wherein the charged particles for implementing the thruster thrust are formed by cluster fragments which are produced by a method according to [one of the] claim[s 1 to 16] 22.

54.

55. 20. (Amended) An ion source [(7)], which comprises:

a cluster production device [(70, 71)], which is [set up] arranged for producing multiple neutral clusters and controlling the cluster size,

a cluster fragmentation device [(72, 73)], which is [set up] arranged for loading the neutral clusters with at least one reaction partner and for fragmenting the loaded clusters into spatially separated cluster fragments with differing electrical charges, and

an acceleration device [(76, 77)] for accelerating the cluster fragments.

56. 21. (Amended) The ion source according to claim 20 [for use as] being arranged in an ion thruster, wherein the control and steering devices [(74, 75)] are [set up] arranged for the purpose of steering positively and negatively charged cluster fragments in different directions, and the acceleration device [(76, 77)] is [set up] arranged for polarity-dependent acceleration of the cluster fragments, so that the positive and negative cluster fragments are used for thrust production.